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Operational framework for the International Year of Older Persons, 1999

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. A number of General Assembly resolutions and decisions support activities for the International Year of Older Persons. These include endorsement of the International Plan of Action on Ageing (resolution 37/51) and promulgation of the related target strategies for the year 2001 (resolution 47/86), adoption of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (resolution 46/91), designation of 1 October as the International Day for the Elderly (resolution 45/106), subsequently redesignated as the International Day of Older Persons (resolution 50/141) and designation of the Year itself (47/5).

2. At its substantive session of 1997, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1997/18 of 21 July 1997, entitled "International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages", based on a text recommended by the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-fifth session,[1] and recommended its adoption to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

3. In its resolution 50/141 of 21 December 1995, the General Assembly promulgated a conceptual framework for the International Year of Older Persons, 1999, and requested the Secretary-General to report to at its fifty-second session on the preparations being made by Member States, United Nations organizations and bodies and non-governmental organizations for the observance of the Year. The present report has been prepared in response to that request. It also includes an operational framework for the Year and beyond to complement the conceptual framework.

4. Section II presents a brief account of activities; a comprehensive list will be included in the calendar of events being prepared for the Internet, with selected activities for distribution in hard copy. To assist countries in their preparations, the annex provides a menu of ideas for activities at the national level.

5. Section III provides a suggested structure for organizing activities in four areas: raising awareness: the society for all ages; looking ahead beyond 1999; reaching out, including to non-traditional actors; and improving networking, particularly in the areas of research and information exchange. These comprise the four dimensions of an operational framework and also incorporate the four facets of the conceptual framework.

II. Highlights of preparations for 1999

A. Key dates

6. The following schedule, based on mandates and current planning, provides dates around which to organize preparations:

(a) The International Year of Older Persons will be launched on the International Day of Older Persons 1 October 1998 (Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/18);

(b) Four plenary meetings of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session in 1999, will be devoted to follow-up to the Year, which should take place at an appropriate global policy-making level (Council resolution 1997/18);

(c) In 2001, three assessments are planned: evaluation of the Year, evaluation of the target strategies adopted in 1992 and the fifth review and appraisal of the Plan of Action. All three events could be consolidated into an intensive evaluation of past strategies as the basis for a strategy to the year 2010 or 2020;

(d) At its thirty-sixth session, in 1998, the Commission for Social Development will review different options for the future review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, in preparation for the fifth review of the implementation of the Plan mandated to occur in 2001 (Commission for Social Development resolution 35/1);

(e) The Commission is also scheduled, at its thirty-sixth session, to examine the theme "Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons", in the context of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. The examination could encompass the essential elements of the "society for all ages", the theme of the International Year of Older Persons;

(f) At its thirty-seventh session, in 1999, the Commission, in follow-up to the Summit, is scheduled to consider the theme "Social services for all", within the context of which it may wish to examine the changing mix of welfare provisions for frail older persons now emerging, with particular focus on how these affect the status of women, youth, younger workers, the well-being of families, and the changing roles and relationships of civil society, market and State.

B. Key players and selected activities

7. In its preparations for the International Year of Older Persons, the Commission for Social Development is being assisted by an ad hoc informal open-ended support group established by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1996/242 of 22 July 1996. At the time of writing, the support group has held an organizational and three substantive meetings (a fourth was scheduled for September 1997). Co-chaired by the representatives of the Dominican Republic and Spain, it has become a major forum for debate and a platform for governmental, non-governmental and expert reports on the Year.

8. Attendance at the first three meetings of the support group included the following: Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritius, Netherlands, Mexico, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela, and the European Union.

9. By August 1997, nearly 50 national focal points had been established for the Year. Plans and activities are getting under way, as the following examples — China, Costa Rica, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom — illustrate.

10. China is planning a series of meetings and events, including on "Ageing: towards the twenty-first century" at Shanghai in 1997 and an international conference on lifelong learning and an international exhibition of products for older persons, in 1998; in 1999, China will organize training seminars in cooperation with the International Institute on Ageing of Malta (ILIA), co-sponsor an international workshop on ageing with the International Federation of Associations of the Elderly (FIAPA) and, in cooperation with United Nations agencies and bodies, is exploring the feasibility of convening an interregional symposium on family and community caregiving.

11. At the national level, China's preparations to date include the launching of a pilot housing programme for older persons in Beijing and the opening of a telephone hot line for older persons.

12. The Costa Rican Gerontological Association will organize a forum on the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons and a National Week of Older Persons to prepare for the Year. It will launch an information campaign for the Year on the theme "Towards a society for all ages", supported by poster displays and media discussions. It will form a coalition of interested parties to elaborate a full programme for the Year, cooperating with the United Nations office in the country.

13. The Netherlands has a secretariat, budget, fund, programme and national committee for the Year, as well as 400 local committees. These are using established events and days to publicize the Year. A celebration of 45,000 participants is planned for 1 October 1999, expected to be Europe's largest event ever for older persons. The last longest day of the century (21 June in the Netherlands) will be marked with a 24-hour gathering of the generations.

14. Leading up to the Year, the Netherlands is organizing, in 1997, a National Brainstorming Day, a news service and two Internet sites: www.seniorweb.nl and www.1999.org. It is mounting three attitude-changing campaigns for the general public, the media and children on the theme "Images of the elderly". A 50-plus fair and a 1 October festival for 35,000 older persons is being arranged, and a free, 175-page *50-Plus Guide* is being published.

15. An elders parliament will be convened in 1998 to discuss issues with elected officials. In 1999, school projects, national postage stamps, film festivals, multimedia festivals via the Internet and master classes (with older persons teaching youth) and many other events will be held.

16. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the non-governmental organization Age Concern has launched a two-year "millennium debate of the age", leading up to a massive conference at the end of 1999 when an "agenda for the age" will be finalized and presented to policy makers and society at large. The project has two interrelated dimensions: millennium papers and the debate of the age. Study groups have been drafting the millennium papers since 1996, producing contextual questions for the debate on five key areas. These are: paying for age, that is, the costs of an ageing society; ageing and the future of health and social care; the future of the built environment as society ages; future work and lifestyles in the new millennium, and values and attitudes in an ageing society.

17. The debate will include interactive meetings, radio, television and Internet discussions throughout the country and will aim to involve everyone: the general public, politicians, employers, academics, volunteers, health providers, designers and architects, the media, lawyers, trade unions, planners, and all government departments. It will reach out to different groups: the voluntary sector, social and health-care practitioners, professional and academic bodies, central and local government, industry and commerce, professionals, interested individuals, women's, youth and

older peoples' organizations, religious bodies, schools and colleges, cross-cultural and ethnic minority groups and many others.

18. The end objective is to achieve national consensus on an agenda for the age. Thus, the 1999 activities are helping to forge a long-term sustainable vision and action programme.

19. At the regional level, various entities have started activities for the Year. The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, in collaboration with the Latin American Parliament, and the Government of Uruguay held a two-day International Forum of the Americas on Population Ageing and Social Integration: For a Millennium without Discrimination of Age in Health Care, in July/August. The Forum assessed progress achieved in reaching the Global targets on ageing for the year 2001, and drafted proposals for regional observances of the Year to be presented to the presidents and heads of state at the Ibero-American Summit in 1998.

20. An intergovernmental Conference on Ageing Populations in the Mediterranean Region is being organized by the International Institute on Ageing in Malta in December 1997. The Institute's extensive training programme is supporting, *inter alia*, capacity-building in several regions. Its TWINAGE network has been established specifically to promote cooperation between developing and developed regions.

21. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will host a regional meeting for the Year in late 1998 or early 1999. It hopes to formulate a regional plan of action on ageing. It has recently issued a directory of national coordinating bodies on ageing and non-governmental organizations active in the field, as well as a compilation of international and regional mandates on ageing. It has published a report, *Lifelong Preparation for Old Age in Asia and the Pacific*, an annotated bibliography and programme issues in the field of ageing and two population studies on the topic.

22. Research and capacity-building will be the focus of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in the lead-up to 1999. The results of an ongoing comparative research programme on the social and economic conditions of older persons will be examined at a meeting in 1999, with the collaboration of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and others. Selected country reports on population ageing are being prepared for completion by 1999.

23. Within the European Union, the Year 1999 presents an opportunity to revive many of the innovations and good practices of the European Year of Older Persons and Solidarity between the Generations, 1993, possibly extending their scope into central and eastern Europe and other regions. Institution-building is being promoted in central and eastern Europe by a network being coordinated by the American Association of Retired Persons and HelpAge International.

24. Within the United Nations system, activities for the Year are being launched at an inter-agency meeting in August 1997. Items for exploration include collaboration through the Internet; maintaining a database of research, policies and programmes; issuing a conceptual papers series; preparing an information kit and devising a "2020 strategy". Separate and collective initiatives will be reported to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

25. Five global networks of non-governmental organizations are supporting initiatives for the Year. Two of these have been especially established for the Year — Coalition-99 and Creative Connections. Coalition-99 is a network of governmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals concerned with exchanging information on preparations for the Year, established and facilitated by the American Association of Retired Persons.

26. Creative Connections is an initiative of the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee in New York. Many of its members have a wider focus than ageing. Committee members have alerted their national affiliates worldwide of the Year, encouraging them to get involved in preparations for the Year, and members have also given presentations on the Year to local groups as they have travelled around the world.

27. The International Association of Gerontology promotes the international agenda on ageing through regional associations and, most effectively, at its quadrennial world congresses which have included a United Nations component in recent years.

28. The biennial meetings of the International Federation on Ageing have come to serve as a platform for non-governmental debate and input to the United Nations programme on ageing. The meeting in Jerusalem in 1995 initiated preparations for the Year; the meeting in South Africa in November 1997 will reach out to the African continent. If funding is secured, the meeting in Montreal in 1999 will coincide with the publication of a global report on older persons and possibly a high-level meeting.

29. The International Federation of Associations of the Elderly has a worldwide network that is particularly active in French- and Spanish-speaking countries. It has established

"1999 liaison centres" on three continents and is devoting its eleventh international symposium, in Martinique in November 1997, to preparations for the Year.

30. These networks, close collaborators with the United Nations programme on ageing, criss-cross and span the world. They reach out beyond ageing constituencies to help make preparations for the Year all-inclusive.

C. Lead agency and supporters

31. The United Nations programme on ageing (in the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) is serving as lead agency for the Year by adapting its ongoing activities and collaborating with interested parties.

32. Providing conceptual leadership and operational clarity is a continuing challenge to the programme, as interest and activities expand with the approach of the Year. For the programme to respond effectively to this expansion, it needs the support of interested parties. The Government of Germany has already expressed its intention to support the programme in addition to its extensive national effort, including setting up a commission, advisory group and focal point, preparing a postage stamp series, making recommendations on "a society for all ages", holding a national parliamentary assembly of older persons in the German Bundestag and many other regional, local and communal events.

33. In the coming months, with assistance from a variety of entities, the United Nations programme on ageing will, *inter alia*:

(a) Assist the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development in their preparations for 1999 and the Commission's ad hoc informal open-ended support group;

(b) Maintain a calendar of events for the Year in hard copy and on the Internet, with technical support from the American Association of Retired Persons;

(c) Prepare a substantive information kit, with assistance from Age Concern and in collaboration with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat;

(d) Promote a debate on the society for all ages, initially at the sixteenth World Congress of Gerontology, in Adelaide, Australia, in August 1997, supported by the Government of Australia, the Government of South Australia and Asta Medica, and subsequently at an interregional meeting in 1998 and through a publication in 1999;

(e) Issue the third edition of the *World Ageing Situation* in 1997-1998, focusing on the four facets of the conceptual framework, with contributions from individual experts and from the International Social Security Association and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women;

(f) Issue the *Bulletin on Ageing* (Nos. 2/3, 1997) focusing on multigenerational relationships, with the International Family Policy Forum serving as guest editor;

(g) Distribute the Countdown to 1999 newsletter, with the assistance of Coalition-99, which is also arranging for Countdown to be translated into French and Spanish;

(h) Compile and issue, in 1997, a directory of national infrastructures on ageing: basic elements, with the assistance of an intern from Denmark;

(i) Collaborate with the non-governmental committees on ageing in New York, Geneva and Vienna on a variety of initiatives;

(j) Establish a collaborative advisory centre on rural ageing at the University of West Virginia; support its expert group meeting in 1999 and international conference on rural ageing in 2000, as well as, with the cooperation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the preparation of a draft plan of action on rural ageing for the decade 2000-2010;

(k) Explore initiatives on urban ageing with interested parties;

(l) Establish a collaborative relationship with the American Association of Retired Persons in its efforts to create a comprehensive database of research, policies and programmes on ageing;

(m) Establish a collaborative relationship with the International Longevity Centre, which held the first of its series of meetings for the Year in June 1997 at United Nations Headquarters, co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations;

(n) Collaborate with other parties in preparing for the Year, including with Global Action on Ageing in reaching the grass roots; the New Humanity movement in defining "the society for all ages"; HelpAge International in developing initiatives in Asia and the Pacific; and the International Council for Caring Communities in convening, at United Nations Headquarters in April 1998, a meeting on the impact of the longevity factor on cities;

(o) Explore with the International Federation on Ageing, the feasibility of producing, through multisectoral collaboration, a report, in the style of reports of the United Nations Children's Fund, on the state of the world's older persons, in 1999.

III. Operational framework for 1999 and beyond

34. The operational framework is designed to facilitate mainstreaming and encourage activities within a long-term perspective. Its specific objectives are the following:

(a) To raise awareness, focusing on the society for all ages, the Year's theme;

(b) To encourage looking ahead, beyond 1999, identifying a vision, priorities and essential processes for the long term;

(c) To reach out to non-traditional actors such as the development community, the media, the private sector and youth;

(d) To improve networking so as to achieve greater consistency and comparability of data and research, and better collaboration among the major global networks that now span every continent.

A. Raising awareness: the society for all ages

35. The theme for 1999, "Towards a society for all ages", has been adopted by several countries and organizations. It lends itself to a broad exploration of the situation of older persons while promoting the ideal of a society that accommodates itself to all.

36. The society for all ages emerged from the concept of a society for all. As noted in the conceptual framework (A/50/114):

> "... we may think of a society for all as one that adjusts its structures and functioning, as well as its policies and plans, to the needs and capabilities of all, thereby releasing the potential of all, for the benefit of all. A 'society for all ages' would, additionally, enable the generations to invest in one another and share in the fruits of that investment, guided by the twin principles of reciprocity and equity" (para. 38).

37. There are several ways of conceptualizing a "society for all ages". An explanation of the concept is to be launched at the sixteenth World Congress of Gerontology and will be continued in the *World Ageing Situation 1997-1998*. Throughout 1998-1999, the issue will be debated and monitored by the support group of the Commission for Social Development. The programme on ageing will host an interregional conference on the topic in 1998, and issue a related publication in 1999.

38. A preliminary exposition is given below, using the four facets of the conceptual framework: (a) the situation of older persons; (b) lifelong individual development; (c) multigenerational relationships, and (d) the interplay of population ageing and development.

39. Guidelines for improving the situation of older persons are well developed and include: (a) the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, listing 18 principles in the areas of independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity, whose promotion is the overall objective of the Year; (b) the International Plan of Action on Ageing, whose 62 recommendations for action lay the broad foundations for activities on ageing, focusing, *inter alia*, on education, employment and income security, housing and the environment, health and hygiene, social welfare and the family; and (c) general comment No. 6 (1995), on the economic, social and cultural rights of older persons, adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 24 November 1995.[2]

40. The general comment draws the attention of Member States to the situation of older persons who, unlike women or children, have no comprehensive international convention addressing their rights. The comment will guide States parties to better understand their obligations to older persons when implementing the various provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.[3] Though the Covenant does not contain any explicit reference to the rights of older persons, it implicitly recognizes the right to old-age benefits through article 9, which deals with the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance.

41. The Plan, Principles and general comment provide a broad framework for action on ageing, and draw attention to specific groups that have tended to be excluded from mainstream socio-economic development, such as older women, migrants, refugees, indigenous elders and the "oldest old".

42. Among the many dimensions of "the situation of older persons", two are emerging to pre-eminence — active ageing and caregiving strategies. The terms "active" or "productive" ageing are currently used in two ways: first, to describe, and thereby to support, the importance of the many socially and economically productive roles open to ageing individuals

in developing countries and, secondly, as an attempt to reverse the phenomenon in developed countries whereby retirement from the formal economic sector automatically negates the formal acknowledgment of the unpaid productive roles of many older persons.

43. The promotion of active ageing in developing countries needs technical and financial international support. Developing countries identified income-generating projects for older persons as their foremost need in the fourth world survey on ageing, 1996.[4] To date, such assistance has been limited, carried out mainly through contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing, and has fallen off to almost nothing in the 1990s. In the role of project design and implementation, consistent support has been provided by HelpAge International in assisting groups of older persons or organizations of older persons to become economically self-reliant. Current initiatives include, among others, the provision of solar tents for agriculture in Bolivia, transmission of traditional skills in Jamaica, and income-generating mills for returnees in Mozambique.

44. Opportunities for active ageing in developed economies have been increasing. At the initiative of Japan, the group of eight industrialized countries, in their Denver communique of 22 June 1997, recognized it as the desire and ability of many older people to continue work or other socially productive activities well into their later years. They agreed that old stereotypes of seniors as dependent should be abandoned, and they discussed how to promote the active ageing of their older citizens with due regard to their individual choices and circumstances, including removing disincentives to labour force participation and lowering barriers to flexible and part-time employment that exist in some countries. The group touched on the transition from work to retirement, lifelong learning and ways to encourage voluntarism and to support family caregiving.

45. A convergence of approaches to ageing in developing and developed countries, under the concept of productive or active ageing, is evident. In this regard, the United Nations programme on ageing is exploring the possibility of convening an expert meeting on expanding older workers' options. Such options include gradual retirement, part-time work and the creation of "initiative centres" in local communities that would provide basic supports (tools, marketing advice, etc.) for a variety of mid-life and elder enterprises.

46. However, in promoting active ageing, a cautious route must be forged between the two extremes of exclusionary "ageism" and an activism that might unintentionally lead to too much demand on older persons.

47. Attention to the development of appropriate caregiving strategies is another priority. As women enter the labour market in greater numbers and the number of the oldest old increases, the supply of informal caregivers will decline, even as the likely demand for caregiving will increase. At the same time, Governments in all areas of the world tend to prefer home care for frail elderly over institutional care, for both humanitarian and financial reasons. Thus, a tension is developing between two distinct policy objectives: promoting equal opportunities in the labour market for women on the one hand, while on the other, actively promoting the role of the family in caregiving.

48. To clarify these apparently conflicting trends, and to develop policy guidelines for caregiving strategies in the next decade, two meetings are planned. In November 1997, the programme on ageing is convening an expert group meeting at the International Institute on Ageing in Malta, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, Alzheimers Association USA and Pfizer Inc. The National Committee on Ageing of China is exploring the feasibility of hosting, in cooperation with several United Nations entities, a related interregional symposium on family and community caregiving in 1999 in China.

49. Simultaneously, many initiatives at the local and national levels are getting under way. One of these is client-centred caregiving in small housing units being promoted by the Salmon Group. The Group came into being after the European Year of Older Persons and Solidarity between the Generations, in 1993, and has extended its activities into eastern Europe. As a contribution to the Year 1999, it is seeking partnerships worldwide in establishing a network and debate on small-scale client-centred care innovations.

50. A recent decision of the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat to disaggregate population data for ages 80 and over by age groups 80-84, 85-89, 90-94, 95-99 and 100 and over in future demographic projections and in the year 2000 round of censuses will provide much-needed information on the oldest old or the "fourth age".

51. Women live longer than men by several years in most countries. They often have fewer resources and more of the health problems associated with advanced age. Thus, income security and health-care strategies for women need to be given priority. At the same time, more research is needed into the biomedical, social and cultural causes of the significant gap in life expectancy between women and men.

52. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-first session, recommended that the preparations for the Year include a gender perspective and decided to address the status of older women and the violation of their rights, at its

forty-second session, and the differential impact of population ageing on men and women, at its forty-third session. It invited other United Nations entities to examine the status of older women, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women.[5]

53. Lifelong individual development, the second approach in exploring the society for all ages, is a relatively new priority within the United Nations programme on ageing. It is based on the simple idea that both individual behaviour and national policy, which affect people at different ages, but especially the young, will shape the situation of people in older age. New interest in the question is partly a response to the rapidity of population ageing in developing countries — a process that will take many only 15 to 30 years, as opposed to the 50 to 100 years it took developed countries in the past. Today's youth, therefore, are an important target group; they need to acquire new knowledge, skills and behaviours if they are to reach their own later years enjoying good health and income security with supportive family and social networks.

54. Youth need information about the long-term impact of the so-called "affluent lifestyles" of smoking, drinking, "junk food", stress and pollution. These lifestyles are taking root in developing countries, according to the *World Health Report 1997*, leading to a rapid increase in chronic diseases that can be prevented but seldom cured. Unhealthy lifestyles in youth and middle age can result in an extended period of debility in later years, with a consequent heavy caregiving burden on families and societies.

55. Youth also need to know that traditional systems of support and social security are changing — perhaps weakening — including family and community networks, especially in developing countries. At the same time there is an erosion of state welfare services in developed economies. Developing the habit of saving over one's entire working life is important, as urged by the World Bank in its 1994 publication *Averting the Old Age Crisis*. Policy frameworks that support savings, access to pensions and provision of social security are explored in the 1996 ESCAP publication *Lifelong Preparation for Old Age in Asia and the Pacific*.

56. Childhood, too, has a particular relationship with later years and has been called "the cradle of longevity". It is now known that "emotional intelligence" is acquired in childhood, together with the imprints of co-dependence, independence and interdependence — "know-how" that facilitates family life, self-reliance and collaboration throughout the life course. Many see a natural bond of affection between children and elders, and the latter have been trained, in places, to be "grandparents by choice" for emotionally deprived children.

57. The ability of individuals to make an early adjustment to longevity will be influenced by their perceptions of old age and by societal attitudes. If old age is accorded meaning and purpose for individual and societal development, it can be approached with interest and confidence and could help shape a kinder, gentler civilization of benefit to all, and of necessity for a time fast approaching when every third individual will be over age 60.

58. With longer life expectancy, mid-life becomes an ever more important phase of life. It could be used for adults to review their past and future life achievements and possibilities, and make the appropriate adjustments in their lives, both in terms of lifestyle and livelihood skills in order to remain active members of society in their now-extended later years.

59. At present, particularly in industrialized countries, the demands of work and family life compete for time and attention of working adults, while those in retirement tend to have abundant free time but fewer responsibilities or calls on that time. Societies as well as individuals would gain by a more even distribution of time spent in education, work, leisure and discharge of family tasks throughout the lifespan.

60. These and other aspects of individual lifelong development will be explored at forthcoming meetings, including an international symposium on restructuring work and the life course, being organized by the University of Toronto and the University of Bremen at Toronto from 7 to 9 May 1998; the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, at Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998; and the International Development Conference, in Washington, D.C., in 1999.

61. A consideration of multigenerational relationships provides a third approach to the society for all ages. It hinges on the concept of "interdependence" and how this can be maintained in family and society as the proportions of old and young change. The emergence of the "inverse pyramid" family is a good illustration of this change. Where once there was a pyramid of many children and increasingly fewer adults and older persons, now the inverse pyramid family is possible, consisting of one child, two parents, four grandparents and, possibly, eight great-grandparents.

62. The practical implications of individual and population ageing for the family rest mainly in caregiving and, for society, in the provision of social services and income security. These two dimensions have innumerable issues to be explored — such as active ageing and an appropriate caregiving mix, as discussed earlier. But the subject is broader still.

63. A concept of multigenerational citizenship is again being discussed, one that invites each generation to shape the public world, seeing it as a continuum that existed before their birth and will remain after their death. Legacies to future generations are a collective responsibility of today's citizens — be this the legacy of natural capital (the environment), physical capital (infrastructure, plant and equipment), financial capital (savings), social capital (institutions and structures) and cultural capital (the values, principles and concepts that are handed down).

64. The *Bulletin on Ageing* (Nos. 2 and 3, 1997) will examine multigenerational relationships from several perspectives: equity, exchanges, caregiving and the particularities of gender, indigenous cultures and migrants. The International Family Policy Forum is guest editing the *Bulletin* and is seeking support for establishing a worldwide inventory of multigenerational initiatives, with expert analysis and commentary, as a major contribution to the Year 1999.

65. The Committee for Development Planning will consider intergenerational transfers and social security at its thirty-second session, in May 1998.

66. Considering the ageing process in its totality (ageing and development: the fourth approach to the society for all ages) requires, according to the International Plan of Action on Ageing, "an integrated approach within the framework of overall economic and social planning. Undue emphasis on specific sectoral problems would constitute a serious obstacle to the integration of ageing policies and programmes into the broader development framework".[6]

67. An integrated approach, as recommended in the Plan, has proceeded more slowly than separate sectoral approaches to ageing (health, housing, etc.). The lifelong approach has only just entered the debate. Macro-level concerns have been mainly in terms of social security costs, usually calculated in terms of rising old-age dependency ratios.

68. The rising dependency ratio of older persons is, in itself, only one of many factors that can influence a nation's capacity to provide income security to its elderly while ensuring economic growth. A broad and more integrated approach would introduce several other factors, including, *inter alia*:

(a) The capabilities of cohorts over age 50 and their opportunities to continue working, including on a part-time basis;

(b) The rates of unemployment and of female employment and the age of entry into the workforce, all affecting overall dependency ratios that, in turn, affect national income and disbursements;

(c) Application of new technologies, which can increase individual productivity as well as national revenues;

(d) Population policies, which could, for example, aim to increase the infant population through pro-natal policies, or the adult population through pro-immigration policies;

(e) Investing internationally in youthful countries, which could simultaneously generate jobs for youth and income for pensioners;

(f) Military spending, and the extent to which spending on "external security" can be translated into spending on "social security".

69. Population ageing also prompts a change in production and consumption patterns, savings and investments, and underscores the need for universal design — an environment that facilitates movement by older persons who may, at times, have difficulties with activities of daily living.

70. Strategies need to be developed to support this integrative approach. These would include integrating ageing into follow-up activities to the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s (on social development, population, women and housing). Progress in this area would meet with global target No. 2 set for the year 2001, which aims to generate support for integrating ageing into national and international development plans and programmes (see A/47/339, sect. III).

B. Looking ahead: beyond 1999

71. According to current projections, in 2030 every third person in the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development will be over age 60. The picture is different for developing countries, where it is the speed of population ageing that catches the eye. It is estimated that it will take Tunisia 15 years for the cohort aged 65 and over to increase from 7 to 14 per cent (2020-2035); it will take Chile 30 years (2000-2030) to undergo a similar transition. By contrast, it took France 115 years

(1865-1980), allowing ample time for adjusting to the socio-economic consequences.

72. In the decades ahead, two important trends will be the speed of ageing in developing countries and the high proportion of older persons in developed countries. Since population trends are foreseeable over long periods, and major changes in population structure have profound implications on many aspects of society, the feasibility of formulating a long-term perspective plan to the year 2020 is being explored. Related national initiatives reported during the General Assembly's plenary observances of the Year will contribute to the preparation of a 2020 strategy, including, possibly, the "agenda of the age" (see paras. 16-18 above).

73. As reported by a Prime Ministerial Task Force on Positive Ageing in New Zealand, there are two possible approaches to preparing long-term perspective plans on ageing. The first was to see older people (however defined) as a distinct group in society and to try to develop ways of improving their experience. The second was to try to improve the experiences of people generally, while at the same time dismantling the barriers that segregate older people from the rest of society. Noting that the two approaches would require different strategies, the Task Force opted for the second approach and is focusing on a few long-term foundational goals and strategies, rather than on a multitude of short-term measures.

74. At the present time, the United Nations programme on ageing is endeavouring to integrate both approaches in its immediate and long-term plans, that is, addressing older persons as a distinct group in society while simultaneously seeking to dismantle the barriers that segregate older people from the rest of society. Both approaches will be taken into account in the evaluation of the Year of Older Persons, the fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, to be conducted by the Commission for Social Development in 2001, and the target strategies adopted in 1992 for the year 2001.

75. Various international initiatives now under way could also contribute to the 2020 perspective plan, including the drafting of a declaration of interdependence on multigenerational relationships, the development of a research agenda on ageing for the twenty-first century and the preparation of an international plan of action on rural ageing for the first decade of the twenty-first century, among others.

C. Reaching out: non-traditional actors

76. The General Assembly, in its Proclamation on Ageing (resolution 47/5, annex), designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons, and urged the international community to reach out to the development community, the media and the private sector. It also pointed out the need to reach younger generations.

77. The Proclamation encouraged donor and recipient countries to include older persons in their development programmes. Progress in this regard awaits the decision of country partners of the United Nations Development Programme to make older persons a target group in their development programmes.

78. Though older persons are not specifically excluded, they tend to be invisible on the international development agenda. HelpAge International has been working to reverse this situation, reaching out to Governments, United Nations agencies and bodies, and funds worldwide. Currently, for example, it is organizing a seminar to develop policies for older people in Thailand, Myanmar, Viet Nam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia and China (Mekong Basin regions) in cooperation with ESCAP, with funding from the Government of Canada. Assisted by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Development Fund, it has established a revolving loan scheme for older persons in Sri Lanka.

79. In the Proclamation, the press and the media were encouraged to play a central role in the creation of awareness of population ageing and related issues. The media are uniquely placed to reach all levels of the community to raise awareness, generate debate and disseminate information on innovations and good practices. It could also help to counter ageist language and behaviour and expose the underlying reasons for "ageism", or age-prejudice, wherever it exists and the values that perpetuate it.

80. The Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat is working closely with the United Nations programme on ageing to develop a multimedia information campaign for the Year. The campaign will mobilize the Department's radio, television, print, public outreach and promotional activities as well as its worldwide network of information centres.

81. The Department is coordinating joint information activities with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes through the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), having held preliminary discussions in July 1997. The Department has also begun discussions

with some key non-governmental and corporate sponsors on jointly funded activities to promote the Year.

82. The activities and materials of the Department's campaign will be targeted, in several languages, at key redisseminators such as the media, non-governmental organizations, government agencies, educational institutions and business organizations at the international and national levels. Information about these activities will be accessible electronically through the United nations home page on the Internet.

83. The Department is exploring the feasibility of organizing an exhibit on a society for all ages that could, *inter alia*, incorporate elements of a worldwide poster competition being launched jointly by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the American Association of Retired Persons.

84. Complementing these initiatives, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service will launch a radio "initiative on age" in October 1998. The initiative could reach as many as 140 million listeners worldwide in English and several of the other 44 languages of the Service. It will explore the implications of individual and population ageing, featuring the voices and views of older people and of younger generations whose attitudes towards older persons and their own old age will be explored.

85. Regarding the private sector, the Proclamation on Ageing urged the international community to support broad and practical partnerships within the United Nations programme on ageing, including partnerships between United Nations bodies and the private sector.

86. Recommendation No. 18 of the International Plan of Action on Ageing covers the steps Governments are advised to take for the protection of elderly consumers, including by ensuring that food, products and equipment conform to standards, that safe use is made of medications, household chemicals, etc., that medicines and prosthetics are available, and that intensive promotion aimed at exploiting the meagre resources of the elderly be restrained.

87. Staying within the guidelines of recommendation 18, the programme on ageing is engaging businesses in a dialogue on ageing — to gain their support for flexible work scheduling, gradual retirement, retraining of older workers and, in a more general way, their support for disseminating awareness of the impact of individual and population ageing. Private sector support has been identified for a meeting on caregiving and gender to be convened at the International Institute on Ageing in Malta in November 1997.

88. Finally, youth have also become an important target group. The Proclamation urged, in the context of national initiatives, that the entire population be engaged in preparing for the later stages of life and old and young generations cooperate in creating a balance between tradition and innovation in economic, social and cultural development.

D. Networking: research and information exchange

89. The objective is to facilitate collaboration across nations and sectors, and to improve the relationship of research to policy formulation. Both objectives are rooted in the 1992 global targets (A/47/339) endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/86.

90. The programme on ageing is seeking to improve collaboration, which is the focus of global targets 6, 7 and 8, by expanding its Internet page for 1999, and connecting it with other related sites. This would benefit many national focal points and national committees for 1999, United Nations country offices and the five global non-governmental networks mentioned above (see paras. 25-30).

91. The Internet could also help to establish closer links between the United Nations and, for example, the Geneva International Network on Ageing (GINA), Generations United, the Universities of the Third Age, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues and many others that have the potential to contribute to the United Nations programme on ageing.

92. To move towards global target No. 4, which aims to improve cross-national research on ageing, including harmonization of terminology and methodology, the programme is consulting with the American Association of Retired Persons in order to establish and maintain a database of research, policies and programmes. It is exploring with the International Association of Gerontology and other interested parties, including Governments and the private sector, the feasibility of convening a meeting on research priorities for the twenty-first century, particularly on how better to relate research to policy needs.

93. If developing countries are to react effectively and in time to the ageing of their populations, a new research agenda is needed, one that works within the resource limitations of countries but provides the essential information for a rapid policy response.

IV. Recommendations

94. To achieve the broad objectives of the operational and conceptual frameworks for the Year, that is, a society for all ages, several strategic measures are needed. It is therefore recommended that:

(a) Research, policies and programmes address, in particular, two areas of the situation of older persons: (i) active ageing, meaning opportunities for older persons to continue to participate in the socio-economic and cultural life of their societies, and (ii) an appropriate caregiving mix for frail older persons, encompassing family, community and institutional care systems that distribute tasks equitably among State, community, family and the primary caregiver;

(b) The international community of experts, practitioners and policy makers develop clear guidelines supporting lifelong individual development, with longevity in mind; multigenerational relationships, with changing family and societal population structures in mind; and the integration of ageing into government policies, which may involve multisectoral policy adjustments;

(c) On the basis of the above and other explorations, the General Assembly consider adopting, in 1999, a short consensus text on the society for all ages to underscore the lifelong and society-wide dimensions of individual and population ageing;

(d) Governments, non-governmental organizations, foundations and the private sector support the efforts of the United Nations programme on ageing, as the lead agency for 1999, to catalyse a debate, reach out to non-traditional actors, including youth, and provide core services for information exchange and research coordination;

(e) All concerned give priority to activities at the national and local levels, improve regional collaboration and explore opportunities for "twinning" between countries, cities and institutions on well-defined projects.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 6* (E/1997/26), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution I.

[2] Ibid., *1996, Supplement No. 2* (E/1996/22), annex IV.

[3] Resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[4] E/CN.5/1997/4, para. 79.

[5] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7* (E/1997/27), chap. I, sect. C, resolution 41/2.

[6] *Report of the World Assembly on Ageing, Vienna, 26 July-6 August 1982* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.16), chap. VI, sect. A, para. 49.

ANNEX

Menu of ideas for activities at the national level

Core structures

1. Appoint a 1999 lead agency or focal point (i.e., an agency or individual to act as information source, and/or convene an exploratory meeting to set up the 1999 committee of all interested parties).

2. Establish a 1999 committee (large membership):

Members could include *traditional actors* — government ministries, organizations of older persons, gerontological institutes, etc. and *non-traditional actors* — the media, youth organizations, schools and universities, development agencies and environmental groups, foundations, women's and indigenous organizations, religious, professional and business entities.

(*Note*: Many national affiliates of international federations are already making preparations for the Year and could be valuable assets for 1999 committees.)

3. Prepare a 1999 programme, with promotional and developmental elements (listed below), as well as outreach to local areas and international contacts.

4. Establish a secretariat and budget. Retired persons could form or augment a core secretariat.

5. Establish a fund.

Promotional measures for 1999

1. Declare, for national observance, the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages.

2. Declare, for national observance, 1 October, the International Day of Older Persons.

3. Adopt, translate and distribute the United Nations Principles for Older Persons .

4. Establish a national calendar and data bank of initiatives to assist information exchange and collaboration.

5. Invite citizens (mayors, community leaders, writers, homemakers, caregivers, etc.) to give their views on a society for all ages or on old age in a new age.

6. Organize media debates on lifelong individual development or on changing multigenerational relationships in family and society.

7. Organize national fairs, with display booths for government ministries, non-governmental organizations, foundations, enterprises, etc.

8. Engage the academic community in the exploration of the principles and practices of an age-integrated society (i.e., a society for all ages).

9. Get ideas from national reports on other International Years, such as of the Family (1994) or for the Eradication of Poverty (1996).

10. Celebrate older persons and ageing on other days, for example on international days for health, women, volunteering.

11. Organize national conferences on selected priorities, which might include, for example:

(a) Multigenerational relationships in family and society: interdependence (measures of independence and dependence);

(b) Flexible work and retirement: part-time work, second careers, worker-caregiver conflicts, etc.;

(c) Caregiving structures, new and sustainable partnerships: home care, long-term care systems, insurance, gender issues;

(d) Rural ageing and development: community enterprises, appropriate technologies, etc.;

(e) Cities for all ages: innovations in living arrangements, services, etc.;

(f) Technologies for all ages: new tools for work and living, agri-tools for elders, etc.;

(g) Towards a society for all ages: adjusting infrastructure; adjusting perceptions;

(h) Lifelong individual development: the content and the context of lives are changing;

(i) Old age in a new age: scenarios for 2000, 2020 and 2050.

Developmental measures for 1999 and beyond

1. Consult the Short Guide for Setting National Targets on Ageing.[a]

2. For long-term issues and priorities, contact the National Coordinating Mechanism on Ageing.[a]

3. Integrate long-term issues and priorities into 1999 preparations — late-life labour, flexible retirement, caregiving strategies, youth perspectives on longevity, multigenerational exchanges, etc.

4. Devise future scenarios for the year 2020.

Reaching the local areas

Thirty-eight suggestions are given in the "Local agenda on ageing for the 1990s",[a] encompassing neighbourhoods, families and individuals; the business sector; schools and colleges; and the media.

Reaching out internationally

1. Participate in the United Nations calendar-1999 to facilitate an exchange of experiences.

2. Consider preparing a comprehensive national report on 1999 and beyond for international distribution.

3. Twin with other countries (cities, universities), particularly north-south and east-west.

4. Host and/or participate in international studies, events or conferences.

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[a] Available from the United Nations programme on ageing.